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Chloë Starr. 2016. *Chinese Theology: Text and Context*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. xiii + 373, Hb £40.00, \$50.00. ISBN-13: 9780300204216.

In the last few decades, the rapid growth of Christianity in China has resulted in a parallel growth in its academic study. Works by Daniel Bays, Philip Wickeri, Richard Madsen, etc., as well as Kenneth Scott Latourette's older volume have become staples in the field. However, these have tended to focus on historical events and expressions of this region, instead of on how Chinese Christians have thought about their faith and their God.

As the subtitle of the volume under review suggests, *Chinese Theology* majestically weaves together the theological texts produced by Chinese Christians with the historical contexts in which they were born. The latter is taken up in Chapters 2, 6, and 8, teasing out the socio-political factors shaping theology after the establishments of the Republic and the People's Republic, as well as the post-Cultural Revolution period. The remaining seven chapters offer more focused treatments on the texts of Chinese theology. Chapter 1 begins in the most logical place: the late-sixteenth and seventeenth century Jesuit mission. Starr speaks about Chinese theology both in terms of Chinese texts authored by foreign missionaries and those authored by the first indigenous converts, suggesting that Chinese theology is more about the medium of communication than the agents behind the theologising. Chapters 3 and 5 focus on two of the most important Protestant thinkers of the Republican period, Zhao Zichen (T. C. Chao) and Wu Leichuan (L. C. Wu), and their works the *Life of Jesus* and *Christianity and Chinese Culture*, respectively. Chapter 4 looks at the Catholic theologian Xu Zongze (P. Joseph Zi), who is rarely discussed in Anglophone scholarship. Usefully, Starr interprets these three thinkers in terms of literary genres, such as a novella or the Chinese *biji* ('jottings'). Whilst these Republican-era figures are investigated largely around their respective magnum opuses, Chapter 7 turns to the significant yet controversial Ding Guangxun (K. H. Ting), through his collection of essays from the 1930s to the 1990s. This provides a useful counterpoint to existing studies on Ding which have tended to focus on the 1980s–90s when he was the preeminent leader of the state-sanctioned Protestant church. Chapter 9 shifts from the church to the academy – a 'Christianity fever' happening within the country's secular universities and academic institutes. It is surprising that Starr devotes this chapter to Yang Huilin. In contrast to figures such as Liu Xiaofeng and He Guanghu, Yang has never publicly professed to be a Christian or a Christian theologian, and would perhaps more accurately be described as a scholar of literary studies. Chapter 10 returns to the church, highlighting key house church figures such as the rural hymn-writer Lü Xiaomin and her popular *Canaan Hymns*, and urban intellectuals such as Wang Yi and Yu Jie.

It is without a doubt that Chloë Starr's *Chinese Theology* is the most comprehensive study of the subject to date. However, whilst she identifies her audience as scholars of theology and Chinese literature, her work has a stronger emphasis on the latter. This is not to say a literary analysis is not important for theology. Yet, those trained in systematic theology may have trouble recognising theological themes such as Christology or ecclesiology in Starr's analysis. It is also peculiar that the book chooses to set aside figures like Song Shangjie (John Sung) and Ni Tuosheng (Watchman Nee) to focus on 'the issues that intellectuals and liberals faced' (pg. 5) – a point which is somewhat contradicted by Chapter 10. A volume like this would benefit from the breadth of the theological spectrum, otherwise it suggests evangelicals and grassroots Christians in China should not be recognised as exponents of 'Chinese theology'. Quibbles aside, it is without a doubt that Starr has offered us a magisterial treatment of the historical developments in Chinese Christian theology. It would serve students well as a textbook. Furthermore, it is a monograph which scholars of Chinese Christianity and those interested in theology in world Christianity must read.

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